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The situation in the Middle East

Measures to eliminate international terrorism

Letter dated 20 June 2003 from the Chargé d'affaires a.i. of the Permanent Mission of Israel to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General

I am writing in order to draw your attention to the latest terrorist attacks perpetrated against the citizens of Israel.

Since the convening of the Summit at Aqaba, Jordan, a new wave of violent attacks has killed 30 Israelis, including children, women and the elderly.

This afternoon, Friday 20 June, at approximately 1.40 p.m. (local time), Palestinian terrorists ambushed a car carrying an Israeli family near the community of Ofra, north-east of Jerusalem. An Israeli man, whose son was married yesterday, was killed when terrorists fired rounds of ammunition at the car, en route to a post-wedding celebration. Four other family members were seriously injured in the shooting, including the American grandparents of the recently married man. The terrorist organization Hamas claimed responsibility for the attack.

Yesterday, Thursday 19 June, at approximately 6 a.m. (local time), a suicide bomber perpetrated an attack in a grocery store in the northern Israeli community of Sde Trumot. The owner of the store, Avner Mordechai, age 63, of Sde Trumot, died of critical wounds he suffered in the attack. Were it not for actions taken by the store owner to obstruct the terrorist and prevent him from entering the adjacent community, the human costs would have been far greater. Mordechai was married and leaves behind six young children. The terrorist organization Islamic Jihad claimed responsibility for the attack.

On Tuesday 17 June, two Palestinian terrorists ambushed a car carrying a family of eight Israelis on the central Trans-Israel Highway, near the Kibbutz Eyal junction. A young Israeli girl, Noam Leibowitz, age 7, of Yemin Orde was killed, and three members of her family, including her younger sister, age 3, and grandfather, were seriously wounded when the terrorists opened fire on the vehicle in the late evening. The Fatah al-Aqsa Martyrs Brigades and the Popular Front for

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the Liberation of Palestine — General Command, headed by Syrian-based Ahmed Jibril, claimed responsibility for the attack.

On Wednesday 18 June, at approximately 1.30 p.m. (local time), a Qassam rocket hit the northern Israeli community of Nativ Ha'asara. The rocket hit the roof of a residential building and exploded before falling into the living room below. The structure was severely damaged, but the residents of the house escaped without injury. Earlier this week, on Sunday 15 June, five Qassam rockets were fired at several southern Israeli towns, including Sderot, which has been the target of scores of Qassam rocket attacks in the past months.

Today's attack is merely the latest attempt by Palestinian terrorists to target Israeli civilians. Countless terrorist attacks have been prevented in recent weeks and days by the extraordinary efforts of Israel's security forces. During monitoring activity by the Israel Defense Forces (IDF) on Thursday 12 June in the Gaza Strip, the IDF intercepted Fuad Lidawi, a Hamas terrorist operative, who was on his way to launch Qassam rockets at Israel. Qassam rockets and other weapons were found stored in his vehicle. This operation is just one example of IDF efforts to thwart directly the ability of terrorists to carry out attacks against innocent Israeli civilians.

At the recent Aqaba Summit, the Palestinian Authority committed itself to dismantling terrorist organizations and to ending violence and incitement. Unfortunately, the Palestinian leadership has so far failed to make the strategic and responsible decision to disable terrorists in any capacity. An extensive terrorist infrastructure continues to operate freely in Palestinian Authority territory, perpetrating murderous attacks against innocent Israeli civilians without reprimand. Virulent anti-Israel incitement continues to undermine the very foundations of genuine peace and reconciliation for both peoples.

Israel hopes that the new Palestinian leadership will take the necessary concrete steps to eliminate terrorism and the capability of terrorists to perpetrate future attacks, by disarming, arresting and bringing known terrorists to justice. Failure by the new Palestinian leadership to take real and genuine steps to eliminate terrorism, in the face of rampant violence, will prevent any progress in the peace process and compel Israel to exercise its inherent right and duty of self-defence. Israel has an obligation to intercept terrorists, particularly those identified as ticking bombs, and deal with those individuals in order to make sure that innocent lives are not lost.

Despite today's murderous terrorist attack, Israel hopes that the diplomatic process will proceed, and that peace for all peoples of the region will be achieved. In order to move forward, the Palestinian Authority must follow through with its commitments. Israel has already started to implement the commitments it took upon itself at the Aqaba Summit, in accordance with Israel's acceptance of the steps set out in the road map, and the conditions, principles and stages described in the speech by President Bush on 24 June 2002. Since the Aqaba meeting, Israel has released Palestinian detainees, dismantled unauthorized outposts, eased security restrictions and held security meetings with Palestinian leadership, providing a strong and concrete indication of the desire of the State and of the people of Israel to conduct a peace process which will lead to an agreed settlement.

Israel calls upon the international community to reaffirm its absolute rejection of terrorist tactics, to accept nothing less than the complete dismantling of the

terrorist infrastructure and to use its authority to compel all regimes that sponsor terrorism in the region to fulfil their responsibilities in accordance with international law and Security Council resolutions, in particular resolution 1373 (2001).

I submit this letter in follow-up to numerous letters detailing the campaign of Palestinian terrorism that began in September 2000, which document the criminal terrorist activity for which the terrorists and their supporters must be held fully accountable.

I should be grateful if you would arrange to have the text of this letter circulated as a document of the fifty-seventh session of the General Assembly, under agenda items 160 and 36, and of the Security Council.

(*Signed*) Arye Mekel
Ambassador
Charge d'affaires a .i.